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INTERRUPTED SUTURE IN CASES OF CLEFT PALATE.

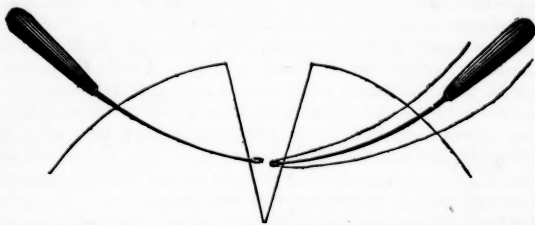
To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

DEAR SIR,—The difficulty of passing the interrupted suture in cases of cleft palate, as well as in all cases of deeply-incised wounds, where adhesive plaster and compresses are inefficient, as in the axilla and perineum, induced me to devise the little affairs I herewith enclose. They were much esteemed by my preceptor, the late George Bushe, and have been favorably noticed by my friends generally. I will briefly state the *rationale* of their application, and a case or two illustrating their use.

In the operation for cleft palate, after the edges of the division are prepared for approximation, however well your patient may have been schooled by frequent irritation of the fauces (a measure that should never be neglected), you cannot rely on a moment's quiet. Every instrument, as yet devised, renders it essential that the patient should be perfectly quiescent for at least a minute, before the operator can pass a single suture. In the event of coughing or vomiting occurring at the moment one side of the cleft is punctured, and the operator is about transferring the point of his needle to the other, the most disastrous results may follow. I have seen the suture, already passed, torn completely out, and the base of the tongue wounded by the needle, obliging the operator to abandon the operation. These needles allow such perfect command that they can be withdrawn in an instant. Indeed, it must be evident to all who are accustomed to perform operations within the mouth, that prolonged manipulations cannot be endured for any definite time by the most resolute patient, nor can sutures sufficient to approximate the deeper parts of many wounds be passed with any needle at present in use. I consider these much preferable also for hare-lip. They are to be made as follows. The one, it will be perceived, is the needle already in use, and known among surgeons as the American needle; the other has an opening in the eye; and their combined use constitutes my invention. They must be made of equal thickness from the eyes to the handle. The eyes should be as near the point as possible, the part in which they are made being flattened, *vertically* as it regards the curve of the needles.

The needles, one in each hand of the operator, are supposed in the following diagram to be passing the suture through a deeply incised wound a full inch from the surface; as soon as their points appear in the wound, the thread is taken from the eye of one needle, by means of the opening in the eye of the other; both needles are then withdrawn at

once : the thread being transferred from the right to the left hand needle, is of course left behind, and can then be tied. It is of great consequence that the exact curve should be preserved in forming them, that the eye should be as near the point as it can possibly be placed, and that each needle should penetrate the integument as far behind the edges of the wound, as it is designed to penetrate in depth, for reasons apparent in the diagram. The points, moreover, should be flat, and of the shape of those annexed—as indeed all needles should be, for a round and sharp-pointed needle is a wedge, and will penetrate with difficulty ; whilst these retain the cutting principle. It is important, also, to pay great attention that the little projection constituting that part of the cleft needle nearest its point, should not project above the opposite one, or it would catch in the muscle in withdrawing it. In short, if made precisely like the draft, they will work most admirably. For cleft palate, the handles may be made twice the length of those annexed.



I operated on a son of Judge Degroot, of English Neighborhood, N. Jersey, aged 9 years. Professor Parker, of this city, was present. The case was a compound hare-lip, and it was necessary to remove a portion of the jaw and one of the upper incisor teeth. The lips were approximated with the above needles, and the case did well. I intend shortly to operate on the palate which is divided through the uvula and velum.

Though I have used them in eleven cases of hare-lip, I will state but one other. This was a patient of Dr. James Miller, of this city. It was also a compound case, and the patient was but 10 hours old. The child could neither swallow nor suck, without imminent danger of suffocation. With the exception of one of the stitches constituting the lower part of one side, for the cleft was double, the case did well. Union was perfect in seven days, and the child sucked comfortably.

A young girl was brought to the city, and placed under the care of the late Dr. Wright, by whom she was transferred to me. She labored under the distressing condition of an incised wound from the vagina to the rectum ; the latter being opened about half an inch, but the former full two inches. The injury had been received by sliding from a hay-stack and alighting on a scythe. I passed three sutures with my needles, and a perfect union was the result.

I have used them in many other cases, but the above explain them sufficiently.

E. H. DIXON.

New York, December, 1841.

DR. PAINE'S INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

[Concluded from page 321.]

BUT, there is one physiological heresy of which I have not spoken, and with which we have been also favored by the physical speculators, which surpasses all others in its degrading tendencies—for it overthrows the science of physiology and medicine at its very foundation. Like all the rest, however, it was a doctrine of the dark ages. It appears to have had its revival in the *laboratory*, though not *exactly* within the prerogatives of that modest handmaid of Nature. It has, however, won its way extensively into medical favor, and chemistry is, as usual, thanked for the blessing.

This doctrine supposes that the fluids circulate in the small vessels by *capillary* attraction—just as oil ascends in a lamp-wick, or water is imbibed by a sponge. So we are told by Liebig, for instance, the great organic chemist, and by many others. The doctrine, I say, is necessarily subversive of all physiological, pathological, and therapeutical principles—since it is one of *mere mechanics*. All the important vital processes being carried on by the small vessels, it must be perfectly apparent, upon the doctrine of capillary attraction, that nothing of a vital nature can be performed by these vessels. In short, I know of no doctrine so derogatory to medical philosophy as this one of capillary attraction.

The ignorant *pretender* will tell us that all this is unimportant; though no one is so much directed by hypothesis, or theory, as this very pretender himself. Does not every empiric in the land prescribe his drastic cathartics for the purpose of cleansing the blood of its supposed impurities? Are they not exactly on a par, in their doctrines, and in their practice, with the most speculative of our enlightened humoralists? Nay, have the ignorant portion of that sect, our Brandreths, our Morisons, *et id omne genus*, any reference whatever to facts or experience? Is it not all hypothesis, and, therefore, all a reckless waste of human life? How is it with the homœopath? Certainly all hypothesis, and never a fact but such as demonstrate his errors—if nothing worse. Mount up the scale, and you shall find at every step of your ascent, from him who *prowls* about the outskirts of the profession, to him who directs the all-potent drug with the most consummate skill, that each and all mainly rely upon their conceptions of the *philosophy* of disease. But you shall also find, that in proportion as Nature has been taken for their guide, and as medical principles are founded upon the absolute phenomena of life, in their healthy and morbid aspects, *there* will always be the greatest reference to facts and experience. How momentous, then, that we should follow Nature, and that our theories should be derived from her observation alone.

The human mind *will have* its theories upon all subjects; and the whole history of medicine is a perpetual exemplification, that in no inquiries do theory and hypothesis abound so universally as in the healing art. This arises, in part, from the intricacies of the subject, but mostly so from the constitution of the mind itself. The Almighty *designed* it for theoretical conclusions, and set us the *example* in those stupendous Theories upon which the Universe, and all it contains, are founded. And

what else are, or should *be*, our theories, than finding out and adopting those of which He is the Author? What other theory in the *natural* world can there be, than *such* as are instituted by the Almighty Being? And shall we hesitate to embrace, and to act upon *such* theories? And yet it is one of the improvements of our day, to insist upon nothing but facts, and to denounce all principles in medicine; as if the Almighty had not ordained principles and laws as well as facts—which are mere emanations from the former.

But, who are they that would thus convert our noble and stupendous science into its barbarian infirmities? They are the greatest theorists of the age—promulgating their speculations under cover of this pretension. This propensity of the mind to theorize is strikingly illustrated, for example, in the writings of Louis (a distinguished Parisian physician), who, although condemning theory and generalizations in medicine, is the greatest speculatist of any era; nay more, he has embodied in a work which purports to be a simple record of facts, a greater number of hypotheses than can be gathered from the whole field of medical literature.

We *must*, therefore, have theories in medicine; and, therefore, let us have the *right* ones. Right or wrong, they grow irresistibly out of the constitution of the mind and the fundamental laws of nature. Let not the mind indulge its great natural propensity without a constant reference to those laws, through the medium of their phenomena. The elements of the former are simple, immutable, and easily known by their manifestations. These manifestations are the facts, and form the substantial ground of all intellectual acquirements. As they relate to organic beings, to their laws, their properties, their functions, whether *morbid* or *healthy*, they are to be found in the organic being *himself*—not in the workshops of the chemist or of the mechanical philosopher. But, even where the mind admits this proposition, if prone to speculation, it too often regards each fact by itself, and rears up hypotheses wrong in themselves, and in conflict with each other. Facts should therefore be compared before they are reduced to theory; or, where they may conflict with acknowledged principles, they should remain in an isolated state till their true nature may be better understood, or till the principles which they appear to contradict may be shown to be erroneous. Had this consideration been duly regarded, had the Attributes of the Almighty been properly respected, or the thousand facts in physiology, our age had not been stained with animal magnetism.

Should you meet with some fact which appears to indicate the dependence of life upon chemical or any other physical forces, the evidence to the contrary is so various and conclusive, that *that* fact must be considered as deficient in some of its elements, which, if known, would readily bring it under a well-established principle in physiology. These absent elements are some other facts which escape our observation, perhaps through necromancy or imposture; and thus what is truly fact, in an abstract sense, is made the groundwork of important error. And did those of you, who venerate the Mosaic Record of Creation as the Word of God Himself, never entertain a *hope* that Geology may yet discover *other* facts which shall bring *such* as are known into better harmony with the Word

of God? May we not believe, as we shall soon see has been often the case with hypotheses founded upon partial facts, that a *solitary* discovery may yet show us that our geological premises have been deficient in a most fundamental element? Should we not *tremble* over the ruins of about one hundred theories of Creation, which, by a recent decision of theoretical geology, even in the metropolis of France, are pronounced "unscriptural and unworthy of record"? Would it not be safer to *rest* upon our facts, and be contented for the present to *know*, that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"; and, in believing this, to think it also *possible* that the subsequent annunciations are equally true? It strikes me, at least, that this is not only the safer, but the *philosophical* course.

But leaving sacred, for our more appropriate subjects, there are principles which are not as clearly confirmed by an observation of nature as the laws of life; and, in such instances, it may be that the supposed principle and the conflicting fact should mutually stand the ordeal of inquiry. This will be accomplished by a full revision of the facts of which the principle had been predicated, and by the multiplication of other facts. It may be found that they do not all harmonize with each other, or it may happen, as with organic beings, that there is a perfect coincidence. In the former case the principle is *prima facie false*; in the latter, it is *prima facie true*; but neither induction will be certain till the newly discovered fact is reconciled to those upon which the principle had been founded, or is shown to be in absolute opposition. In the former case, the principle stands, and derives farther confirmation; in the latter, it is more or less shaken, or may be overthrown and the facts become assembled under a new doctrine.

It sometimes happens that the discovery of a new fact will overthrow the most brilliant theory. Had Christison succeeded in that higher pretension than was ever made by the alchemists—that of converting cyanogen into silicium, he would have upset the whole science of chemistry—and in *this* respect he would have rendered a service to physiology. In the instances, however, to which I am now referring, the theory is generally of a compound nature, and some of its elements rest upon facts which nothing can invalidate. In such cases, also, the facts are of a demonstrable nature, and that which invades the theory is clear, specific, and liable to no uncertainty. La Voisier, for instance, laid down the doctrine that oxygen gas is a *supporter* and the *only supporter* of combustion. The former part of this doctrine must remain forever true; the latter was only good till some other substance should be discovered, which, like oxygen, would maintain combustion. It was so far a hazardous principle, as it was concerned about abstract facts, and might or might not, therefore, be a fundamental law of Nature. The very next revelation of the laboratory might show that this part of the theory was a mere assumption—as it certainly was. A *single* fact was only necessary to the purpose; and already not less than three other agents are known to be supporters of combustion. Some have even supposed that all cases of intense chemical action, where heat and light are developed, are instances of combustion; and then we have spontaneous human combustion, for

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which no theory has been assigned. But, the universal doctrine, which respects heat and light abstractedly, rests principally upon the two facts just stated, and is otherwise deficient in the analogies which relate to true combustion. It is, therefore, like Vacca's doctrine of inflammation, and that of spontaneous human combustion, probably nothing but an assumption.

Again, it was supposed to be a law that oxygen was essential to *acidity*; and although it be generally true that this substance is the acidifying principle, others are now known to exist. Here, this great agent placed the same theorist in another predicament corresponding exactly with the calamity which befel the doctrine of combustion. The theory was partly true, and partly false; whilst its universality was overthrown by a single fact. In all such instances, where the laws have no great range of phenomena, it is unphilosophical to theorize beyond the absolute facts in possession. But, here also, other theories, of the same latitude and uncertainty as that which supposes combustion in all cases of intense chemical action, when light and heat are developed, have sprung up—some chemists supposing that acidity often arises from the associated effect of several elements.

In the examples before us, therefore, we not only see how readily certain doctrines, which rest upon abstract facts, may be overthrown by a single discovery, but with what readiness the mind starts off upon hypotheses when opportunity arises for the exercise of ingenuity. It is the peculiar misfortune of science to generalize too hastily; and it often happens that the explosion, or the introduction, of one error, is the parent of many others. It is also astonishingly true, as we have especially seen of the doctrines of life and disease, that a few phenomena are abstracted from the whole, of which they may be only sequences of the others, and are made the ground of doctrines which are in perfect conflict with other and better theories that are instituted upon the *more fundamental* facts;—and thus a blind disregard of consistency is permitted to prevail, till a most incongruous series of assumptions is presented to us as the science which Nature teaches.

Although facts are the only foundation of theory, it is not unfrequently the case that certain existences, and the laws by which they are governed, may be fully demonstrated without any knowledge of the *nature* of the fundamental subject to which they refer. This, for instance, is true of light; for, although we know not the condition in which it exists, or whether it produce its impressions by impulses and oscillations, or by projections, &c. (from near or remote objects), the laws of reflection and refraction are permanently fixed. The same affirmation may be made of electricity, and the laws which this remarkable agent obeys. And so, also, of heat. These laws, and those in relation to light, are founded upon such facts as cannot be shaken; and when, therefore, apparently conflicting phenomena may arise, we may be certain that they will be ultimately reconciled to the established principles. Least of all can any theory of the *nature* of light, heat, or electricity, or of the modes in which they are developed, affect the laws which have been founded upon their phenomena. And though it be possible that light, electricity, and heat,

are modified states of a common substance, their phenomena, and the laws which are predicated of those phenomena, declare that some peculiar, but unknown imponderable substance exists, upon which those phenomena depend. They declare it to be *sui generis*, differing as much from all things else in Nature, as was its distinct and specific Act of Creation, when the Almighty said—"Let there be light, and there was light." We know it to be different from every other existence, because it is distinguished from all others by its phenomena and laws.

Just so is it, gentlemen, in respect to the powers and the laws of organized beings—the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms. It matters not whether the principle of life, whose elements we denominate the vital properties or vital powers, be ponderable or imponderable, tangible or intangible, or, like the soul, immaterial; for, like the soul, and light, it has its infinitely diversified and peculiar phenomena, and its peculiar laws. Like the soul, and the principle of light, therefore, it must have a real existence—as real as was that other specific Act of the Almighty Being by which He superadded the vital principle to man, when He breathed into his inanimate structure the breath of life;—and therefore, by analogy, by Unity of Design, and by some analogous process (of which the foregoing annunciation is probably metaphorical for its greater intelligibility), into all other organic beings. How stupendous the conception—how corroborated by all the phenomena and laws of life—*how atheistical the doctrine which engrafts those vital properties upon the elements of matter, that they may rob the Almighty of His highest of all prerogatives—the creation of living, intelligent beings!* And may it not be that the announcement of the creation of "the breath of life," subsequently to the institution of the organic structure, was especially intended to prohibit this very doctrine which ascribes to the elements of matter the essential requisite for organizing themselves?

We may be ignorant of the *principle* of life, yet understand its whole government; and the objection is perfectly futile, that we cannot reason about that principle because we cannot demonstrate its nature. Will you deny the existence of the soul because you cannot see it? Will you deny the Almighty because the eye cannot see Him that made it? What else do we know of the most tangible substances, than that they exhibit certain phenomena? Did not Berkeley reject the testimony of his *senses*, because he could not comprehend the nature of matter? But, did not *consciousness* compel him to recognize the immaterial soul, when he denied the existence of the *body* which it inhabits? Do you go to Revelation for your proof of an Almighty Being? Then, by the same rule your faith must repose upon the declaration, that man was first created an inanimate structure, and that animation was superadded as a distinct Act of Creation. Take either ground, Revelation, or the phenomena of Nature, and you must be consistent. Here, as in most things, Revelation and Nature mutually illustrate and sustain each other. Their annunciations are equally direct upon the subject before us, and open to the understanding of all. Our conclusions, therefore, flow irresistibly from *whichever* premises you may select.

Although it be rather premature, I will carry on my illustration in re-

spect to life, by supposing the existence of some principle analogous in its material nature to that of electricity, or light, though essentially different in its constitution. Grant this fact, and skepticism is at once dissipated. You *see* and *feel* the thing, and yield to your sight and touch where you would not to thousands of demonstrations which are less likely to deceive. You grant the principle of light as an imponderable substance, because it impresses the sight, and this is your only natural proof of its existence. But, when *this* solitary proof is withdrawn by the interposition of the moon between us and the sun, your belief in the existence of an universal elastic medium, capable of being again rendered luminous by solar impulse, is in no degree affected. You go on to believe, though you do not even *see*, and have nothing but a dead analogy to impress the conviction.

Supposing, then, that organized beings possessed a principle of life that could, like light, be *seen*—they would then be allowed to be governed by this agent, and we should be relieved of the encumbrance of the physical and chemical hypotheses. But, though no such principle address itself to the sight like electricity or light, its existence is far more variously and conclusively attested by other phenomena. These phenomena, results, or facts, determine also the nature of the laws which prevail throughout the animated kingdoms; and, being wholly different from such as rule in the inorganic world, it is *prima facie* evident, that powers or properties of which they are predicated, carry on the processes of health and disease. But, it is not *analogy* alone which forces this conclusion. The facts of which it is affirmed are incomparably more numerous and specific than those which appertain to all other powers of Nature; whilst the scrutiny of ages has never produced a fact in opposition.

Indeed, with so much light upon our subject, so much of fact to substantiate our conclusions, it would seem highly probable that all facts which may be raised in opposition have no relative bearing, and that they are brought forward in the spirit of hypothesis.

The more comprehensive a law may be, the more readily is it known and determined, and the less likely is it that apparently conflicting facts will arise. Whenever such are produced, it is owing to a want of proper investigation. The facts are examined superficially; and the speculative or the credulous mind seizes upon some prominent characteristic, and pushes its opposition to nature under the spur of novelty, or the delight of discovery, or the goad of ambition. This, as we shall ultimately see, is emphatically true of the application of chemical forces to the processes of life, and of the more strictly physical to the interpretation of disease and therapeutics.

Let us now apply these remarks in the way of another brief illustration. When Crawford promulgated his doctrine of animal heat, which was founded upon chemistry, it *should have been* obvious that his *indispensable* facts were only assumptions; since all analogy in relation to organized beings rendered it in the highest degree probable that chemical agencies have no lot in the function of respiration, or in the production of animal or vegetable heat. The properties of life are too universally concerned with the results of organic beings to admit the probability that

Nature is so inconsistent with herself—or, rather, the Almighty with Himself, as to have instituted a great system of government for the special economy of the organized kingdoms, and at the same time have admitted the forces of inorganic matter to determine *some* fundamental result; and that result, especially, having intimate alliances, and close affinities with all such as clearly depend upon the vital principle.

Crawford's doctrine, however, prevailed almost universally, till it was finally shown, by the chemist himself, to be defective in the necessary facts. Chemistry then started off in pursuit of other hypotheses of animal heat that should be conformable to its own habits and prejudices. It elaborated a now prevailing doctrine that heat is evolved by the conversion of the fluids into the solids, with some mysterious connection with atmospheric air. But, it overlooks the perfectly subversive fact, that adult warm-blooded animals have an uniform and exalted temperature, and that an exact equilibrium is preserved between the conversion of the fluids into solids and of the solids into fluids, whereby the temperature of all adult animals should be regulated by that of the surrounding atmosphere; whilst in infancy, the temperature is lower than in adults, although nutrition overbalances secretion. These facts are irresistibly conclusive against the hypothesis, and are one of the numerous examples in which chemistry has introduced into organic philosophy doctrines which are in total opposition to its own well-established laws. Other hypotheses, of a similar nature, have sprung up upon the ruins of Crawford's—neglecting all Unity of Design, sifting the facts for such only as are plausible, regardless of all the opposing phenomena of life, and scouting the grand principle in philosophy which forbids an unnecessary multiplication of causes. Before this invasion of chemistry upon the vital doctrine of organic heat, the phenomenon was expounded upon purely mechanical principles, as digestion had been; it being supposed to arise from the friction of blood upon the circulatory vessels. Here, however, was something which was merely contingent, and in no respect involving a violation of principle; and I would far sooner take this palpable error, than the absurdities of the laboratory.

It will be a part of my *agreeable* task to exhibit the fallacies of the physical hypotheses of life and disease, as well as to inculcate principles which exalt our science above the mere world of matter, render it consistent in all its details, and present it to your attention as a department of knowledge fundamentally distinct from all other pursuits. Then shall you feel the quickening influence of a philosophical knowledge which distinguishes you from the rest of your race—of a knowledge which led the great father of our art to affirm that “a philosophical physician is like a god”—when you shall have some ennobling glimpses at a system of principles and actions of which the profound in other sciences have no just conception, and which you *alone* are qualified to direct to a great and specific result.

And this carries me again back to the essential philosophy of disease. Assuming that morbid actions are carried on by the forces which govern the natural functions, we may rationally conclude that every pathological change consists in some new mode of action which has been induced in the vital powers by morbid causes, and that the object of therapeutics is

to restore the natural condition of those powers. When, therefore, we hear that inflammation, fever, or venous congestion, are constituted by stagnation of blood, and that all their results are interpreted by physical agencies, we may be certain that such hypotheses have no foundation. But, allowing these remarkable exceptions to the ordinary course of nature, what would science be worth, what its advantages to mankind, when thus surrounded by exceptions which cover the whole fabric with doubt, and which divest the most important diseases of all ground for any intelligible treatment?

There is no practical pursuit, in which consistent and philosophical theory is so important as in medicine. Every practitioner, as I have said, is irresistibly influenced by theoretical views of disease, and none more so than they who are most ignorant of its merits. How important, therefore, that our first theoretical conceptions should be *right*—since, being right or wrong, they will be either for good or for evil. Where medical doctrines are not laid upon the broad basis of Nature, or where mechanical or chemical philosophy is allowed to usurp the place of *vitalism*, you will commonly find that theoretical views, and the application of remedies, are at the mercy of every prominent symptom. As new symptoms are constantly rising as the disease acquires exasperation, the hypotheses and the treatment undergo the most contradictory changes—being often within a few hours in absolute opposition.

Thus, gentlemen, you perceive that neither the poorest nor the best of us can move without *theory* as well as experience for our guide; and it behooves us, therefore, to lay well the foundation of medical doctrines. Whether true or false, they will surely operate; and nothing is more difficult than to correct the errors which we imbibe in the course of a medical education. It is with a view to the importance of these objects, that I have addressed you in this general manner in my first lecture, as well, also, to give you some apprehension of the objects of my course, before we embark upon a consideration of the *Materia Medica*, which I shall teach you in its special relations to medical philosophy. The field over which we shall travel, is of boundless extent, but is everywhere marked by prominent outlines. These outlines I shall be mainly employed in presenting to your attention, under the scrutiny of a vigorous analysis. They have all an intimate association—beginning in simplicity and ending in unfathomable complexity; yet always true to the simple elements, and always determined by immutable laws. Beginning with what is simple, we shall ascend, step by step, to what is complex—till at last, and along a chain of the closest analogies, we attain the most intricate of the whole, and which embraces every part of our plan—the consideration of remedial agents, and their just application to disease. I shall endeavor, therefore—feebly it is true—to teach you the Institutes of Medicine as they are founded in Nature, and with an undeviating view to the *Materia Medica*. And that this great ultimate object of all medical acquirements should have been taught in our schools apart from the Institutes of Medicine, has always appeared to me an artificial and unnatural separation. I know not, indeed, how the *Materia Medica* can be intelligibly taught without being associated with extended instruction in the

principles of physiology and pathology, to which the investigation of every article should have an unceasing reference. Isolated from these, the *Materia Medica* can, at best, consist only of a dry detail of facts, without a spark of the animation of which it is susceptible, with no associations to illustrate its vast and endless relations to disease, or to connect them with memory—nothing to govern their therapeutical application, but the monotony of an empiricism as sickening as the drugs themselves.

BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

BOSTON, DECEMBER 29, 1841.

PUBLIC HEALTH OF BOSTON.

In a conversation, the other day, with Mr. Hewes, the venerable Superintendent of Burials, he observed that the mortality of Boston, the past year, would not exceed that of 1840, which was by no means so large as that of many other cities. No epidemics have prevailed, nor has there been any alarming outbreak of disease either in Boston or its environs, in 1841. At this time there is an increasing prevalence of scarlet fever, chiefly confined to small children, and attended with the severity of symptoms which usually marks that disease at mid-winter. Although a considerable number of deaths by this disease has been returned at the Health office, it is not precisely correct to say that the malady is alarmingly prevalent.

Rheumatic affections have been very common of late: even young persons speak of suffering intensely by those deep-seated pains in the articulations—the shoulders, for example—which have usually been mostly confined to aged people, who have led a life of exposure. The variable character of our northern climate, together with the luxury of hot rooms, and badly-ventilated sleeping apartments, explains very satisfactorily the cause of rheumatic sufferings in those who have hardly entered upon the active stage of life.

Report of the New-Orleans Board of Health.—We have had by us, for several weeks, a report signed by Dr. E. H. Barton, President of the New-Orleans Board of Health, dated Nov. 17, respecting the late epidemic in that city. We intended to insert it entire in the Journal, but have been unable to find room, and can now but refer to some of its more important statements. In announcing that the epidemic, which had been of long continuance and malignant severity, was at an end, the Board take pleasure in referring to the kindness and sympathy which have been manifested towards the sick and afflicted, at an expenditure of many thousands of dollars. The whole number of deaths by the fever, reported to the Board during the season, up to Nov. 1, was 1325; of which, 561 died at the Charity Hospital, probably near 500 at the other hospitals and charitable associations, and the balance in private practice. These deaths are considered as so many victims to the *acclimating process*, out of a probable number of 1500 subject to it at the commencement of the fever. The mortality is presumed to have been 10 to 12 per cent. in private practice,

and from 30 to 40 in public and private hospitals. The gratifying fact is stated that no instance has been known where a *second acclimation* was necessary among those who have suffered from the fever, unless in the interval several winters had been spent in a northern climate. A comparison is instituted of the epidemic of the present year with those of former years, to show that its fatality is less now than formerly. There have been ten yellow-fever years since 1803, and the average loss by the fever is stated to have been not over 800. The most fatal one was that of 1822, when the deaths were 803, or 1 in 53.28 of the entire population, whereas during the last season the deaths were only 1 in 78.12. A table is also given of the mortality from all diseases for the months of August, September and October, in the years 1817, '19, '20, '22, '23, '37, '39, and '41, showing a ratio to the entire population, respectively, of 1 in 37.62, 1 in 33.09, 1 in 47.63, 1 in 31.60, 1 in 37.27, 1 in 38.76, 1 in 61.73, and 1 in 48.15. From a comparison, also, of the mortality of the years in which the epidemic *did not exist*, from 1820, the Board come to the conclusion that there is a gradual amelioration in the climate, the mortality having improved from 1 in 29.03 in the first of those years, to 1 in 35.41 in the last. By deducting from the last the mortality of the Charity Hospital, the ratio will be 1 in 46.70, and during the two last non-epidemic years only, 1 in 51.15. Of the deaths by fever during the past season, 1000 were from foreign countries, and nearly 600 were of less than one year's residence in the city.

Dr. Draper's Lecture.—Dr. C. A. Lee had the goodness to send the introductory of the Professor of Chemistry in the University of New York, Dr. Draper, which came near being overlooked in the mass of pamphlets which poured in upon us last week; but, happily, it was recovered in season to say that it is a creditable performance. It appears plain to the reader of it, that the author has no idea of being a mere guide-board in the University—pointing the way—but that he intends going on the road himself, in company with the inquirer, to show him minutely and understandingly all the objects on the route. Only one extract can be made to-day—but more are in reservation, and we are sure they will be read with pleasure.

"The changes that we see in living things, are the consequences of fixed and immutable laws. The acorn never produces a fir tree; nor by any art or device, does any living thing escape its final dissolution; there is, as it were, a stern necessity in the case; a law of mutation, which prescribes the origin, the progress, the end of everything. The hardy form of the strong soldier, must change into the care-worn aspect of the broken veteran. Whilst, then, physical and chemical forces have their operation, do not misinterpret what I say—there is something more than these. When I reflect on the powers of the human understanding, I am lost in amazement. What is it that gives to the mechanism of the brain these marvellous qualities? I perceive, that on its tablets are registered all the events that have happened in my life; there, too, are the impressions of all that I have heard, and all that I have read. There, too, are engraven the shadowy forms of the innumerable words and names of things, in the different languages I know. There, too, are pictured the facts and events which compose the domain of history and the sciences. In those silent galleries are hung the portraits of the friends that are

around me, and of the friends that are dead. I call up lineaments whose realities are gone to decay, and re-visit again the scenes of boyhood. The intricate music of Italian singers still lingers there, which I listened to years ago; or the more simple melodies of a country life. The echo of those prayers is still heard, which an unskilful tongue first learnt at a mother's knee. And now the power of remembering things that are past, is only one of the many functions of the brain; is it not also the seat of all that passion dictates, the source of all that action performs? In it are the first seeds of all that we resolve; and by it are received all those impressions which afford us pleasure or give us pain. The higher powers are also there; and, above all, it is the house of REASON. Shall I then fail to assert the presence of a controlling principle of intellectuality, the operations of which I feel, the existence of which I know?"

Baltimore Animal Magnetism Report.—Although the newspapers of that city had circulated, extensively, the result of the animal-magnetism exhibition in Baltimore, a regular report, under the signatures of Drs. C. A. Harris, T. E. Bond, Jr., &c., has subsequently appeared, in which the details are as circumstantial as could be desired. The concluding words of the report read thus—"In conclusion, it is our deliberate opinion that the whole exhibition by Dr. Collyer, was a miserable trick, and an insult to the good sense of this people." What will the impartial, scientific Boston committee on animal magnetism say to this?

Vermont Medical College.—By the circular, which is distributing, we are reminded that the annual course of lectures will commence at Woodstock, in March next, in the new College edifice erected the past season. A new professorship, of *general and special pathology*, has been established. The board of faculty consists of seven professors, who are gentlemen distinguished for their professional attainments. By an act of the Legislature, passed in 1835, this institution was made independent of any other in the State—the charter declaring that the "trustees shall have power to give and confer all such medical degrees, honors, diplomas or licenses, as are usually given or conferred in Colleges or medical institutions."

Medical Almanac for 1842.—After mature deliberation it has been thought advisable to publish the next volume of this Almanac in July, instead of January, for the purpose of embracing the statistics of the medical schools, which will then have closed their lecture terms. This will also afford an opportunity of obtaining the names of newly elected officers, &c.—besides enabling the editor to embody a variety of local and general medical intelligence, not to be gathered at a much earlier period. Publishers have brought in their experience to influence us in this arrangement. Those gentlemen, therefore, who have ordered the work, must have patience till about the middle of the year, when it will be published, and will then embrace parts of two years in the information it communicates.

Statistics of Lunacy in the U. States.—According to the last census, there are in the States, 4278 insane and idiotic white persons, supported at the public expense, and 1000 at private charge; of colored persons,

1957 at the public, and 845 at private cost. The whole number, therefore, of lunatics and idiots, collectively, is 17,080, in a population of 17,013,379. According to the researches of our accurate friend, Dr. Brigham, the average number of persons who annually become insane, in the United States, is 5719. No country in the world has such ample and generous provisions for this class of sufferers, as have several of the northern and middle States. The principles which called these admirable institutions into being, are extending themselves, and we fondly expect that within a few years, no State in the confederacy will be without a well constructed and well managed insane hospital.

Ulcerated Tongue.—Very many persons, we learn, have suffered within the last few weeks, with a singularly inflamed condition of the tongue, which, after having remained considerably swollen for two or three days, becomes studded over on the upper surface near the apex, and at the sides, with minute, ragged, smarting ulcers. In connection with this, it occurs to us that some gentleman has spoken of the prevalence, in this neighborhood, of a similar diseased state of the tongue in very many horses. Will some one collect the facts?

Success of the Operation for Strabismus.—Various hints have been thrown out recently, both in this country and in Europe, especially in the latter, that the division of the muscles of the eye for the cure of strabismus had been proved nearly or quite useless, by the return in a short time of the pupils to their original mal-position, or the occurrence of a divergent strabismus. No proof, however, of this unexpected result, founded on any number of cases, has come under our observation. Indeed the only statistical return of cases of a year's standing which we have seen, presents quite a different result. The one to which we refer is contained in a late No. of the London Medical Gazette, and is furnished by F. B. Dixon, of Norwich. He gives a list of forty-one cases of strabismus convergens treated in November, 1840, by division of the rectus internus. The results, as ascertained mostly by actual inspection, were:—thirty-one cases, where both pupils are perfectly central; five cases, where the pupil of the eye treated is perfectly central, with slight obliquity of the other eye; three cases of complete reversion of the pupil of the eye treated to its deformed position; two cases where the squint was changed to a leer. Mr. D. adds—"Although the operation is not certainly and uniformly successful, it has every right to be classed among established surgical operations, inasmuch as it exhibits a fair general average of prosperous results; and what more can be said in favor of any surgical process?"

Guaiacum in Cynanche.—Large doses of guaiacum have lately been given successfully by Dr. Carson, in England, in cases of inflamed tonsils. In one of the cases, reported in the Medical Gazette, ten grs. of powdered guaiacum were given three times a day, and a warm poultice applied to the throat. During four days the size of the tonsils diminished slowly each day, and all the symptoms improved. The dose was then increased to a scruple thrice a day. The improvement was more rapid, and in five days more the tonsils were nearly natural.

Etymology of a modern Term in Surgery.—MR. EDITOR: Having recently seen Dr. Mott's circular respecting his Institution for the treatment of Curvatures of the Spine, &c., which he denominates Orthopædic, I notice that he spells this word with the diphthong œ. Dr. Brown, of this city, who was the first in this country who opened a similar Institution, denominates his, Orthopedic—i. e. he omits the o. As you are a linguist, Mr. Editor, will you be kind enough to settle the orthography of the word.

Answer.—We believe the substantive orthopedia and the adjective orthopedique are of French coinage, and we suppose Dr. Brown converted the latter into an English adjective, by substituting *ic* for *ique*. We see no reason why this is not proper; but if we revert to the Greek and coin an English word from *orthos*, straight, and *pous*, foot, it would be orthopodic. If we derive it from *orthos*, straight, and *pais*, child, it should be orthopædic. If from *orthos*, and *poico*, to make straight, it would be orthopoetic or orthopætic. We are at a loss to know from whence orthopædic is derived, and see no reason why the word should not be spelt orthopedic—as first introduced into this country.

Connection between Abundance of Food and Mortality: by M. Melier.—In this memoir, which was read at the Academy of Medicine of Paris on the 7th of September, the author established, by numerous documents drawn from the histories of various countries, that the number of deaths always corresponds with the price of food. "Wherever there's a loaf added, there's a man born," said an economist: and nothing is more true than this metaphorical expression. If we represent the variations of the general mortality and those of the price of bread at different times, by two curved lines which rise and fall with all the fluctuations of these particulars, we shall find all their curvatures exactly, and with the most perfect regularity, corresponding. The constant increase of the population of France for a certain number of years is easily explained by the progress of agriculture, the modifications which the laws relating to corn have undergone, and especially by the introduction of potatoes. The influence of the dearth of food, however, is observed more distinctly in the year next following than in that in which it has occurred.—*Gazette Medicale*, Septembre 10, 1841.

Spinal counter stimulation in Congestive Fever.—Dr. Jno. B. Baird, of Franklin, Ky., writes us as follows: "In this neighborhood, this fall, the fevers were wont to assume a congestive type, and the bowels to be obstinately torpid—the strongest cathartics, repeated from day to day, producing no alvine evacuations. In such cases, sinapisms over the spine, as recommended by Professor Yandell, Professor Caldwell and others, invariably produced the desired effect, if used in time, and those who were treated without them, as certainly died."—*Western Med. Jour. of Sci.*

Number of deaths in Boston for the week ending Dec. 25, 38.—Males, 20; Females, 18. Stillborn, 2. Of consumption, 5—dropsy, 1—scarlet fever, 9—old age, 2—dropsy in the head, 2—croup, 3—infantile, 3—brain fever, 1—disease of the spine, 1—erysipelas, 1—dropsy on the brain, 1—dropsy in the chest, 1—fits, 1—inflammation in the throat, 1—inflammation in the head, 1.

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June 19

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